



WASHINGTON STATE SENATE

Senator **SPECIAL TOWN HALL EDITION**

**LISA BROWN**

3rd Legislative District • [lisa.brown@leg.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.brown@leg.wa.gov)

A graphic banner for Senator Lisa Brown's town hall. It features the Washington State Capitol dome on the right and a faint portrait of a person on the left. The text is overlaid on a grey background.

## Town Halls

Saturday was a great day for democracy in action. I want to thank all of you who were able to attend one of our two 3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District Town Halls. I greatly appreciated the thoughtful questions, feedback and discussion regarding the important issues and concerns that we face in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Spokane region and our state. Over 165 people turned out at Northeast Community Center at 10:00am on Saturday morning, and over 200 people turned out at The MAC in the late afternoon. I came away energized by the level of civic engagement in our community, and I promise that I will take what I heard back to the legislature and continue to fight for the issues that matter most to us all. I am truly honored to represent the people of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District!

## A Turning Point in the Legislative Session

A week ago Monday was the last day most bills had to pass out of their chamber of origin in order to be considered for overall passage. That means Senate bills had to be passed out of the Senate in order to be eligible for consideration in the House, and House bills had to be passed out of the House in order to be eligible for consideration in the Senate. This marks the halfway point in the session. Now the focus changes in two key ways.

In the coming weeks, we'll see less floor action as the focus returns to committee hearings as we consider the votes that were passed by the House. During this time, I and my colleagues in the Senate will also testify in on behalf of our bills as they are heard before House committees. It's all part of the arduous process that requires bills pass both the House and Senate before they can go to the governor to be signed into law.

At the same time, budget negotiations will intensify as we decide which public services to reduce in order to balance the budget. Given the varying priorities of lawmakers and districts across our diverse state, this is no simple exercise. To bring our spending in line with the depressed revenues of the Great Recession, everyone knows we must make major reductions that will impact many Washingtonians across our state. The question is which services we will reduce and who they will

### Contact Information:

#### Olympia Office:

307 Legislative Building

#### By Mail:

Senator Lisa Brown  
PO Box 40403  
Olympia, WA 98504-0403

#### By Phone:

Olympia Office: (360) 786-7604

Spokane Office: (509) 456-2760

Toll-free legislative hotline:  
1-800-562-6000

TTY/TDD Hearing impaired

affect. And the answers to that question won't come quickly or easily.

## Bills that made it out of the Senate

- **Helping businesses and unemployed workers.** We passed a bill that would provide \$300 million in permanent tax relief to businesses in Washington, extend unemployment benefits for 70,000 unemployed workers through federal funds, expand the state's Training Benefit Program and temporarily increase newly unemployed workers' weekly benefits by \$25. ([House Bill 1091](#), passed 41-4)
- **Campaign finance reform.** We passed a measure that would crack down on deceptive campaign practices by increasing disclosure of the identities and agendas of individuals and groups behind political messages. ([Senate Bill 5021](#), passed 46-0)
- **Medical marijuana reform.** We approved a bill to clarify the state's confusing marijuana laws by establishing a regulatory system for the sale and purchase of medical marijuana for qualifying patients. ([Senate Bill 5073](#), passed 29-20)
- **Coal-free Washington.** We passed a plan that would transition our state from coal energy production—the biggest single source of pollution in our state—by 2025 and provide funds for site cleanup, energy technology development and job creation, including assistance for community economic development. ([Senate Bill 5769](#), passed 36-13)
- **Reforming retire/rehire.** We addressed abuses in rehiring employees who have just retired and begun collecting pensions by reducing the retirement benefits of those who are rehired if their post-retirement employment exceeds 867 hours in a calendar year. ([Senate Bill 5852](#), passed 49-0)
- **Shoring up the GET program.** We approved a solution to ensure the long-term health of the state's Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) program that lets Washingtonians prepay for college tuition credits within a program that keeps pace with rising tuition costs. ([Senate Bill 5749](#), passed 47-0)
- **IT Piracy Prevention.** My proposal, which passed this week addresses IT piracy by encouraging Washington companies to stop contracting with firms who steal intellectual property, creating legal remedies for companies against competitors that steal their intellectual property, cleaning the supply chain of pirated information technology, and adding tens of thousands of jobs and billions in revenues to our state and national economy. The issue of

hotline: 1-800-635-9993

By E-mail:

[lisa.brown@leg.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.brown@leg.wa.gov)

Web site:

<http://senatedemocrats.wa.gov/senators/brown>

For staff contact information  
click [here](#)

[Web Site](#)

[Contact me](#)

pirated information technology is significant enough that our state simply cannot wait for action at the federal level ([Senate Bill 5449](#), passed 39-7)

- **On-Site Child Care for Fitness Instructors.** This bill I sponsored allows the people who help us keep our lifestyles healthy the same access to child care that you and I have when working out. ([Senate Bill 5172](#), passed 48-0)

## Bills that aren't moving forward

As I mentioned in my last update, on average around 90% of the bills that are introduced are never actually signed into law. At each critical stage of the process there are bills that do not make it through the legislative gauntlet. Here are a couple of examples of bills that did not have the necessary support to make it out of the Senate:

- **Regarding the safety of certain children's products.** The purpose of this proposed legislation, that I supported, was to further look at the chemicals in children's products. Proponents of the bill felt that even though recent reports show that manufacturers are complying with chemical regulations, harmful chemicals still exist in children's products and more needs to be done to ensure that children are protected. Opponents felt the current law has not been fully implemented and this bill would have provided new costly requirements on businesses. ([SB 5231](#) died in the Rules Committee)
- **Removing the cap on the maximum number of small loans a borrower may have in a twelve-month period.** This bill, that I did not support, aimed to regulate payday lending practices and provides for regulation of licensees who are specifically authorized to issue small loans (also known as payday loans). A licensee currently is prohibited from making a small loan to a borrower if making that small loan would result in a borrower receiving more than eight small loans from all licensees in any 12-month period, and this bill removed that cap. Proponents felt consumers have been turning to the Internet where there are many unregulated lenders. Opponents felt this was an attempt to undo the many consumer protections that were put into place in 2009, and the law should be left alone. ([SB 5547](#) died in the Rules Committee)

[About the Legislature](#)

---

## Major reform: public safety

I continued last week with my short series of [blog posts](#), and want to address successful reforms to state government implemented by the Legislature over the years. I want to share the fantastic news happening in our corrections system as a result of smart investments that have both saved billions of dollars and made our communities noticeably safer.

First, the startling statistics:

Washington's crime rate is at its lowest point in 20 years. Our crime rate has fallen by a third since 1990, with violent crimes down by 34 percent and property crimes down by 36 percent. This translates into 56,000 fewer crimes, which has avoided \$5.1 billion in victims' costs *every two years*.

Other states around the country have achieved similar reduced crime rates as we have, but they've done so by putting more people in prison, which can get extremely expensive. Washington has used a very different approach to achieve our reduction in crime: *we've reduced the number of criminals who commit them*. Had Washington relied on incarceration to achieve today's low crime rates, 18,330 additional people would be housed in our correctional facilities, costing the state \$1.1 billion every two years in prisons costs alone – with overall additional biennial criminal justice costs totaling \$2.2 billion to state and local governments.

So how did we do it? Click [here](#) to read my full blog post.

Also on the topic of public safety, I want to close by taking this opportunity to applaud the Inland Northwest Joint Terrorism Task Force for their vigorous investigatory efforts that led to the apprehension of a suspect last week in the thwarted MLK day attempted bombing. I know the community and I offer our heartfelt thanks to law enforcement for the work that has been, and will continue to be done, on this ongoing investigation.

I greatly appreciate hearing from you. Please continue to [phone, mail or e-mail me](#) or my [staff](#) with your thoughts on various issues, ideas or concerns you have as the legislative session moves forward.

Sincerely,





P.S. Remember to check out the Senate Democrats' [podcast](#) "In the Loop" for a summary of the week's events or visit us on twitter [@WASenDemocrats](#). A tip for twitter users, follow [#waleg](#) to see what other people are saying about the Washington State Legislature!

Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.

If at any time you decide you no longer wish to receive updates from me, please go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/subscriptions/member.aspx?chamber=s&member=brown> to remove your name from the list.

**Washington Senate Democrats** – [SenateDemocrats.wa.gov](http://SenateDemocrats.wa.gov)